



COME ON IN Slovenian Soldiers enter a building while clearing a town during the exercise Combined Resolve. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class James Brown.

BUILDING THE POOR MAN'S JCET:

Promoting U.S. and Partner Nation SOF Interoperability while supporting SOF-CF interdependence at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center

BY MAJOR PETE RUSSO

After more than a decade of war, U.S. and partner-nation special operations forces have come to appreciate the criticality of interoperability. U.S. and partner-nation SOF have learned to operate together despite differences in language, operational culture and national caveats. Maintaining and expanding our current ability to operate together as part of the Integrated Global SOF Network poses a challenge in an era of constricting budgets and reduced manning. Moreover, with operational requirements likely to remain at a steady state, training opportunities for SOF must be multi-faceted to be viable.

Understand the Operational Environment

Joint combined exchange training efforts have long been the main pillar of regional engagement strategies at the theater special operations command level. A key component of efforts to promote interoperability between U.S. and Allied SOF, JCETs remain critical to building, expanding and maintaining the Integrated Global SOF Network. With requirements far exceeding resources, we should seek to identify additional venues that augment our ability to meet this requirement.

Despite their utility, JCETs lack opportunities for SOF integration and interdependence with conventional forces. While U.S. SOF has internalized the importance of SOF-CF interdependence, allied SOF (many of whom are primarily direct action forces) has not fully embraced this paradigm. Identifying opportunities to foster an operational cultural shift in this area will be critical to the long term

success of the Integrated Global SOF Network. Historically eschewed as among the least lucrative training venues for SOF, Combat Training Center rotations in the European Command area of operations represent a valuable opportunity for SOF.

CF brigade-centric CTC rotations have historically bordered on the precipice of “nice to do” rather than mission essential because they compete with operational deployments. For CTC rotations to have maximum viability as SOF training venues, they need to combine SOF appropriate unilateral training attractive to both U.S. and partner nation units with opportunities for SOF-CF interdependence. In essence, CTCs would need to evolve from their legacy construct to become short duration “poor man’s JCETs” which combine the normal emphasis of JCETs with SOF-CF interdependence. A conceptual way ahead for using CTC rotations in this manner should include the following to maximize their attractiveness and their effect:

- SOF-appropriate mission sets executed in conjunction with allied SOF.
- U.S. and partner SOF-CF interdependence structured for interactions at the correct level.
- Realistic live fire, close quarter battle and force-on-force training.
- Close air support training for SOF joint terminal attack controllers.

While this construct does not address foreign internal defense or unconventional warfare as delineated tasks, it pre-supposes both U.S. and partner-nation SOF partnered during the rotation for a “defacto” FID effect.

SOF Truth #5: Most Special Operations require non-SOF assistance.

With increased emphasis on the importance of SOF-CF interdependence and the need to maintain and expand interoperability with partner-nation SOF, Special Operations Command Europe, U.S. Army Europe and the Joint Multinational Training Command have collaborated to establish a SOF Cell at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany. Chartered to support CTC rotations as well as U.S. and allied unilateral SOF events, the SOF Cell coordinates and supports training at both Hohenfels Training Area and Grafenwoehr Training Area.

Located at the crossroads of Europe, JMTC and JMRC are uniquely situated to facilitate engagement with allies from both the U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command AOR. With extensive live-fire training facilities and maneuver areas, as well as a robust capacity for simulations (through the Joint Multinational Simulation Center), the organization hosts partner-nation and U.S. SOF and CF units on an almost daily basis. Beyond the capacity for U.S. to U.S. SOF-CF interdependence, the organization is well poised to enable U.S. to partner nation SOF-CF interdependence as well. With coalition operations rapidly becoming the norm, setting the conditions for CF commanders to expand their comfort level with SOF from other nations is a critical underpinning of the Integrated Global SOF Network.

Exercise Combined Resolve

Combined Resolve 1 served as a “proof of principle” for the concepts outlined above. A multinational training rotation with partner-nation soldiers from seven nations (Czech Republic, France, Croatia, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Serbia and Sweden) executed in November 2013, this event included both U.S. and Allied SOF. A Task Unit from SEAL Team 5 and an Allied detachment from France’s Commando Parachutiste de l’air no. 10 (CPA-10) participated in Combined Resolve 1. During the first half of the three week rotation, both units executed live-fire training, JTAC events and other SOF-specific events. During the latter half of the rotation these units formed Special Operations Task Group 14 and executed SOF-appropriate operations in coordination with the multinational brigade participating in Combined Resolve 1.

SOF Appropriate mission sets executed in conjunction with Allied SOF.

Based on input from the leadership of SEAL Team 5 and CPA-10, the SOF Cell (working in conjunction with the USSOCOM J-7 FMD/ Special Response Planning Cell) developed “injects” for the training operational environment based on those units’ training emphasis. Given the direct action and personnel recovery focus of SEAL Team 5 and CPA-10, the scripted injects reflected those priorities. For additional depth and granularity, DA and PR missions incorporated warrant based operations, interagency considerations and a realistic level of coordination with the conventional-force commander in order to gain approval and support for the operations.

SOF Imperative #3: Facilitate Interagency Activities

JMRC has been a pre-deployment “gateway” for allied CF supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in recent years. As a result, the SOF Cell was able to capitalize on resources already in place in order to maximize the realism and relevance of the missions for participating SOF units. The law-enforcement professionals, legal

advisers, interagency and media staff at JMRC assisted in the development of the training scenarios, and acted as role players during Combined Resolve 1. In an effort to increase the realism for CPA-10 participants, the legal advisor staff/role-player supporting the scenario employed only the target language (French) and remained in character throughout all interactions with the unit, which was so successful that participating personnel did not realize that he was a U.S. national prior to the final after action review.

The overall context of the rotation also set the conditions for improved U.S. and Allied SOF interoperability. While the participating units had an inherent DA focus, the requirement to operate as a SOTG required them to work as equal partners. Given the high skill level of the French CPA-10 detachment, it would be inappropriate to categorize this effort as building partner capacity, and would more appropriately be defined as supporting allied SOF interoperability. The underlying value of Combined Resolve 1 was that it required two DA-centric forces to bend some of the cultural taboos within the DA “tribe” and operate across national lines. This dynamic is critical to the success of the Integrated Global SOF Network in the years to come.

U.S. and Allied SOF-CF interdependence structured for interactions at the correct level.

Following the transition from the live-fire training conducted during the first half of Combined Resolve 1, the SEAL Team 5 Task Unit and French CPA-10 detachment formed SOTG-14. In order to structure the operational environment in a SOF-appropriate manner, the SOF Cell ensured this unit was written into the scenario as a SOF element whose operations spanned several battlespace owner boundaries, and had a SOF chain of command independent of the CF battlespace owner. The SOTG received its missions and guidance from its CJSOTF (i.e. the SOF Cell), but had to work with the CF command structure and abide by the caveats of his multinational task force in order to prosecute targets. In order to gain approval during the CONOP process, the SOTG-14 leadership and staff had to contextualize their actions within the framework of the over arching strategic goals of the Combined Resolve 1 scenario.

As an additional forcing function for SOF-CF interdependence, SOTG-14 was required to rely on the CF command structure for rotary-wing support, outer cordon security and logistics. By design, no programmed assets were simply given to SOTG-14. The SOTG-14 commander and his liaisons (who worked in the division tactical operations center throughout the scenario) were required to negotiate with the battlespace owner and make their case for high demand assets (i.e. rotary-wing support). One added benefit to these negotiations was that they also provided an opportunity for the U.S. battlespace owner to gain exposure to the concept of an allied SOF unit executing sensitive operations in his area of operations.

Realistic Live Fire, Close Quarter Battle, and Force on Force Training

During the final planning conference for Combined Resolve 1, SEAL Team 5 and French CPA-10 toured the live-fire training facilities at both Hohenfels and Grafenwoehr and developed their own program’s of instruction for execution during the rotation. Each unit initially conducted training unilaterally, but executed combined training during the latter portion of the live-fire phase of the exercise. Both elements developed programs incorporating combat marksmanship and close-quarter battle as the foundation of their live-fire training.

The French CPA-10 detachment that participated in Combined Resolve 1 had a high level of training and was a seasoned force with several recent combat deployments together. As a result, they moved at a rapid pace and used the assets available during the rotation to fine tune their standard operating procedures. They began with a short program of CMMS, followed by a week of intensive live fire training in GTA's multiple shoot-houses. As CPA-10 transitioned from stand-alone events to scenario-driven full mission profile's they coordinated with the CF aviation units participating in the rotation, and were able to integrate rotary-wing infiltration into their mission sets. CPA-10 also conducted numerous iterations of force-on-force DA missions with all participants employing simunitions.

With a recent influx of new teammates, the SEAL Team 5 Task Unit that participated in the rotation used it as an opportunity to integrate recent Basic Underwater Demolition School graduates into the platoon. The SEAL leadership developed and executed a program of instruction, which emphasized CMMS and SOP integration. With the lead petty officers acting as instructors, the unit trained and assessed members on operations standards, CMMS events similar in scope and execution to Special Forces Advanced Urban Combat Critical Task Evaluations. Following the CMMS segment of training, the task unit transitioned to a force-on-force close-quarter battle emphasis, rotating through several shoot houses on a daily basis in order to present a broad scope of diverse problem sets to new platoon members.

Following immersion in the operational environment phase of the exercise, SOTG-14 (SEAL Team 5 and CPA-10) operators conducted combined CMMS training each morning prior to receipt of mission. Each unit alternated responsibility for hosting CMMS training for each other while the SOTG leadership began planning and preparation for the days' mission.

Close Air Support training for SOF Joint Terminal Attack Controllers

With a dedicated U.S. Air Force element, rotary-wing aviation participation, and an extensive simulations package, Combined Resolve 1 offered a diverse series of CAS and close-combat attack opportunities. Both the SEAL Team 5 Task Unit and the French CPA-10 detachment participating in Combined Resolve 1 had SOF JTAC's either organic to them or attached for the rotation.

During Combined Resolve 1 the USAF element at JMRC (BULLSEYE Team) developed CAS situational training exercises, designed for JTACs to control live aircraft in the context of an overarching tactical problem set. Prior to, and during each iteration, JTACs from BULLSEYE mentored SOF JTACs and provided them with insight on emerging tactics, techniques and procedures as well as best practices within the JTAC community of interest. Both SEAL Team 5 and CPA-10 participated in multiple iterations of the training.

In addition to the CAS STX, both SOF elements participating in Combined Resolve 1 had the opportunity to execute simulated controls via the AC-130 virtual call for fire simulator. Dialoguing live with former AC-130 sensor operators and fire control officers located at Hurlburt Air Force Base via the Joint Training Exercise Network,



ALL CLEAR Special operation forces from Croatia conduct close quarter battle training to prepare for Exercise Combined Resolve II at Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany. U.S. Army photo by Gertrud Zach.

personnel executed a multitude of five line AC-130 CFF scenarios. Of note, this training satisfied some of the requirements for JTAC currency as specified in the Theater Air Control Information Computer System used by both U.S. and NATO JTACs.

While adverse weather and other factors precluded live controls during the exercise, future rotations (Combined Resolve 2 in late spring of 2014) have excellent prospects for supporting JTAC currency with both fixed-wing (F-16, Tornado) and rotary-wing (AH-64) aircraft slated to participate in the exercise. While the SOF Cell did not fully meet its vision for JTAC training during Combined Resolve 1 (JTAC controls of aircraft dropping live ordnance), participating units were able to increase their proficiency in CAS-related tasks during the rotation.

Conclusion

SOF participation in Combined Resolve 1 provided an initial template for future SOF participation in CTC rotations. As a strategic tool, CTC rotations could set the conditions for regionally aligned SOF to execute training with Allied SOF as part of a long-term persistent engagement strategy in support of the Integrated Global SOF Network. With consistent Allied SOF participation, these "poor man's JCETs" could be used to promote interoperability, build trust and expand the reach and influence of USSOCOM.

As a mechanism for preserving the hard-won lessons learned for SOF-CF interdependence, there is no better resource than the CTCs. In order to draw SOF, however, the CTCs must represent the best possible use of available time. The underlying opportunity to promote SOF-CF interdependence must be buttressed with opportunities for unit-driven training tailored to SOF requirements. SOF-appropriate missions, live-fire exercises, and CAS training are and will remain the supporting pillars of this effort. **SW**

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